

HISTORY OF UKRAINE

Period Prior to Kyivan State|

Period of Statehood (879-1360)|

Period of Lithuanian & Polish Rule (1360-1599)|

Cossack Period (1599-1712)|

Decline of Ukrainian Statehood & Culture (1712-1783)|

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Ukraine or "The Ukraine"

V. DECLINE OF UKRAINIAN STATEHOOD AND CULTURE (1712-1783).

After the defeat of Mazepa, Tsar Peter intensified his efforts to subjugate Ukraine. Hetman Skoropadskyi had his powers restricted by Russian supervisors. His residence was transferred from Baturyn to Hlukhow near the Russian border, where two Russian garrisons were stationed to ensure his loyalty to Moscow.

The Ukrainian population became burdened by the plundering of the Russian military units, dispersed throughout the country. Cossacks were sent to work on the construction of canals near St Petersburg, connecting the river Volga with the Baltic Sea. Thousands of Cossacks died from hunger, exhaustion and sickness. Russian nationals replaced many Cossack colonels.

In 1722, the Tsar appointed a council called the "Little Russian Collegiate", which was controlled by senior Russian officers and headed by brigadier Velmyaninow, to monitor and audit the hetman's activities and decisions. This, for practical purposes, transferred all powers to the Russians, leaving the Cossack hetman and his officers only with empty titles. Hetman Skoropadskyi was very upset by such situation; he became ill and died in 1722. Tsar Peter used this opportunity to abolish the office of hetman altogether. He directed the Cossack colonel Polubotok to perform the hetman's duties under the supervision of

Velmyaninow and refused to agree to Cossack requests to the election of a new hetman.

The Russian occupiers continued to persecute and impoverish the Ukrainian population. They kept sending more Cossacks to work on construction of the canals, connecting the Caspian Sea with the Baltic Sea. From 1721 to 1725, some 20,000 Cossacks perished.

Polubotok was an honest and energetic man. He managed to improve law and order within the Cossack establishment and to improve the living conditions of the population. However this did not please the Russian authorities, who relied on disorder and corruption to maintain their grip on Ukraine. They feared Polubotok's growing popularity and his efforts to re-establish the Hetmanate.

Velmyaninow complained to the Tsar that Polubotok was not complying with his directives. Consequently Polubotok was arrested and interrogated under torture in Petropavlovsk fort, near St Petersburg. He died there, as a martyr for the Ukrainian cause in the autumn of 1724, in spite of the Tsar's belated efforts to save him and to reconcile with the Cossacks.

Tsar Peter died soon after, at the beginning of year 1725. Ukraine was thus left at the mercy of Velmyaninow and his henchmen. As for the Cossack colonels, some were imprisoned near St Petersburg and the others, who were not already replaced by Russians, kept quiet.

His wife Catherine succeeded Tsar Peter. Faced with a possible war with Turkey, she needed the Cossacks and wanted to return to them some of their former freedoms. However she faced a stiff opposition from the "old guard" in the Russian government, consequently the Cossacks received only few minor concessions. Catherine died in the spring of 1727 and the grandson of

The new Russian government sacked Velmyaninow and his "Little Russian Collegiate", released the Cossack colonels from jail and appointed 70-year-old Danylo Apostol as Cossack hetman. On 1st October 1727 the Cossacks formally accepted Apostol in a ceremonious election in Hlukhow. Although reporting to

Russian "resident" Naumow, the new hetman managed to carry out considerable improvements in Ukrainian situation. His loyalty to Moscow was ensured by the presence of one of his sons who was a virtual hostage in St Petersburg.

Tsar Peter II died in 1730 and his aunt Tsarina Anna became the new ruler of Russia. When hetman Apostol fell ill and became paralyzed, she refused to hand over his powers to the Cossacks and ordered a Russian "resident", Prince Shakhovskii to form a council, consisting mainly of Russians, to take over. Hetman Apostol died in January 1734 and later in that year the Zaporozhtsi in the Sich decided to come over from the Turkish to the Russian side.

With Ukraine becoming almost a province of Russia, the russification of political, religious and cultural life intensified. Intermarriages with Russians were encouraged and any efforts to regain independence were brutally suppressed. Cossack colonels were kept under constant observation and subjected to house searches at the slightest sign of disloyalty. Even any attempts to obtain justice were punished; when, in 1737, Kyiv's city counselors tried to defend their rights against Russian excesses, they were all jailed. Things were so bad, that when in 1740 an English general Keith was temporarily appointed in place of a Russian administrator, people were amazed by his human behavior and tolerance.

Times were hard for the top layer of Ukrainian society, but even harder for middle and lower classes and peasants, who suffered most from Russian exploitation. Cossacks were being forced to fight for Russia against the Turks, Tatars and Poles for small rewards, and often for nothing. Under such circumstances, the yearning for the return of the Hetmanate autonomy persisted. The possibility of this would happen occurred after the end of war with Turkey in 1740 and death of Tsarina Anna in 1741.

The short regency of Anna II was terminated by a palace revolution, whereupon the daughter of Peter I, Elizabeth was installed on Russian throne. Elizabeth was sympathetic to Ukrainian cause because, prior to becoming Tsarina, she befriended and fell in love with a handsome son of a Cossack court choir singer, Oleksiy Rozumowskyi. She married him after her coronation. While

visiting Kyiv in 1744, she agreed to promote the Cossacks' request to re-install the hetman's office and proposed Oleksiy's younger brother Kyrylo Rozumowskyi for this position. Twenty year old Kyrylo, who studied abroad, returned in 1746, married into the royal family and was bestowed with many orders and titles.

In 1747 the Russian senate was requested to take steps toward the re-establishment of the Hetmanate. In February 1750, the ceremonious formality of election of new Cossack hetman took place in Hlukhow, followed by celebrations and festivities.

In the spring of 1751 hetman Kyrylo Rozumowskyi, again with great ceremony and parade was installed as hetman. Unfortunately, being brought up in St Petersburg, Rozumowskyi was a stranger to Ukraine and the ways of life there. His Russian advisor Teplov was unsympathetic to Ukraine's newly won autonomy and did all he could to hinder its development. Rozumowskyi himself was bored with life in Ukraine and preferred to spend most of his time in St Petersburg.

During this period, Ukraine was divided into several parts such as Left Bank consisting of the Hetmanate, Slobidshchyna and the Zaporozhian Sich, The Right Bank, consisted of Halychyna (Galicia), Wolhynia, Bukovyna and Transcarpatia. The Hetmanate included areas around Poltava, Lubny, Peryaslav, Kyiv, Nizhyn, Chernihiv, Hlukhiv and also areas, around Starodub, Pochep and Mhlyn. The neighboring areas centered around Kharkiv were called Slobidshchyna meaning free (from serfdom) lands also referred to as Sloboda Ukraine. They included Izyum, Balakleya, Akhtyrka, Sumy and, areas around Bilhorod, Ostrohozsk and Sudza.

Originally adventurous people, who tried to establish themselves free from Polish and Russian domination, settled these lands. They formed Cossack regiments for protection from the Tatars and for some time was able to lead an independent life, because they served as a buffer from the Turks and the Tatars. However later they fell under direct Russian rule; the autonomy of Loboda Ukraine was abolished under Catherine II in 1765.

To ensure lasting domination over these two parts of Ukraine, Russians tried to suppress the Ukrainian culture. They disallowed Ukrainian language in books, schools and theaters. Moscow controlled the church and government and the only way for a person to advance was to speak Russian and to be loyal to Moscow.

While Ukraine on the east side of Dnipro (Left Bank) was being russianized, the western Ukraine consisting of Galicia Wolhynia and Bukovyna (areas around Lviv, Ternopil Lutsk and Chernivtsi) was under the Polish influence. Polish authorities were preventing not only national, but also economic development of the Ukrainians. The Orthodox Church was being gradually taken over by Polish dominated Catholic Church.

Between western Ukraine and, the Russian dominated parts on the east side of the Dnipro, was a large territory on the Right Bank, partly de-populated by the recent wars involving the Cossacks, Poles, Russians, Turks and Tatars.

Gradually, the Polish nobility began to return, reclaimed their landholdings and started to exploit Ukrainian peasants as serfs. The resistance to this, at first, was in the form of outlaw gangs, said to have robbed the rich to help the poor. Some of the gang leaders were even considered as folk heroes, such as Olexa Dowbush, who operated between 1738 and 1745. There were also uprisings by the so-called Haydamaks, generally during hostilities between Poland and Russia.

The biggest uprising was in 1768. The Haydamaks, led by Maxym Zaliznyak and Ivan Honta, captured Umanj and killed many Polish oppressors and their Jewish collaborators. They expected help from their Orthodox "brothers" from Russia. However Russians made peace with Poland, captured Zaliznyak, Honta and many other Haydamaks and handed them over to the Poles. Those, who were not immediately tortured and executed, were tried in Kodno and sentenced, in most cases, to death.

The Transcarpathian Ukraine (areas around Uzhhorod and Mukachiv) was under Hungarian rule. Overwhelmingly rural in character, Transcarpathia had a Ukrainian—Ruthenian peasantry, a powerful Hungarian nobility and a substantial number of urban and rural Jews. The Ukrainian population there did not display

much enthusiasm for independence but managed to retain their language, customs and religion.

Tsarina Katharine II, who ruled Russia from 1762, after short reign of her husband Peter III, decided the cancellation of the Hetmanate. Hetman Rozumovskyi resigned and, in his place, on November 1764, Tsarina re-installed the "Little Russian Collegiate", under the presidency of Graf Rumyantsev. Rumyantsev's policy was to eliminate all remaining traces of Ukrainian autonomy and separatism; to introduce serfdom of peasants and to integrate Ukraine with Russia. The Cossacks and the population resisted this at large.

In 1767 the Tsarina ordered the election of deputies from all parts of the Russian Empire in order to be informed what kind of government the people wanted. The deputies from Ukraine declared their desire for Hetmanate autonomy. This angered Rumyantsev and he sent out his officers to persuade the electors to elect deputies supporting his government. People who resisted were jailed. However in spite of all efforts of Russian authorities, the popular sentiment for return of the Hetmanate system continued.

In 1772 Galicia and, two years later, Bukovina were annexed to the Austro Hungarian Monarchy, which had somewhat improved the conditions of the Ukrainians. In 1774 the Uniate church (renamed to Greek Catholic church) was, by imperial decree, equalized in status with the Roman Catholic Church. Educational reforms in 1775 allowed for instructions in the Ukrainian language. However on balance government policies favored the Poles.

The Cossack stronghold, the Zaporozhian Sitch, was subservient to Moscow and was utilized for raids on Crimea and Turkey. During the Turkish war, which started in 1768, several thousand Cossacks supported the Russians in battles on land and Sea. Their efforts were rewarded by eulogies from the Tsarina but little else and restrictions of the Cossack freedoms continued. Their lands were being colonized by Russians, Serbians and other foreigners with aim of creation of so called Novorossiya or the New Russia state in the south of Ukraine.

After end of the Turkish war in 1775, the Cossacks were being gradually disarmed and in the Summer of that year, Russian general Tekeli surrounded the Cossacks in the Sitch itself with a superior force and demanded abandonment of their fortress. Faced with such overwhelming odds, the Cossack chief Kalnyshevskyj surrendered. The Sitch was destroyed and abolished by Tzarist edict of 3rd August 1775.

Kalnyshevskyj and other Cossack leaders were exiled to Siberia. The Cossack lands were granted to Russian nobles; Cossacks were told to disperse and settle in towns and villages or to join Russian forces. Many Cossacks escaped and settled in Turkey near the Danube delta. In 1778 they were formally accepted under Turkish rule. By end of 1780 all districts, which were formerly under the Hetmanate, were incorporated into Russian regime. In 1783 all Cossack regiments were transferred to Russian forces; peasants were prohibited to leave their landlords, which made them serfs on their former land. Ukrainian church autonomy was abolished and church property was transferred to Russian treasury.

